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General Notes.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.

An Expedition to Labrador.

Some scientists and explorers have devoted considerable time and attention to the exploration of certain sections of Labrador, notably Prof. Packard, Mr. Stearns, Prof. Lee, Henry G. Bryant and Mr. A. P. Low, of the Dominion Geological Survey.

The reports and writings of these men interested me so deeply that I resolved to devote a summer to exploring in Labrador, and so I organized a small party last June, with the intention of visiting the interior table-lands of the peninsula by way of Hamilton or Grand River, already explored by Mr. Bryant to the Grand Falls. The party, besides myself, consisted of Mr. Howard Bucknell, ornithologist; Mr. G. H. Perkins, geographer, and Mr. G. M. Coates, botanist.

We got together a complete camp outfit, two Rushton canoes for use on the rivers, a set of surveying instruments, collecting materials, etc., and thus equipped we took passage with "Dr. Cook's Arctic Expedition of 1894," on the steamship Miranda, since famous on account of the numerous accidents which befell it, and its final abandonment in Arctic seas.

We left New York on July 7th last, and enjoyed a pleasant voyage to North Sydney, Cape Breton, where we stopped to take in a supply of coal. Here we visited the copper mines and the great coal mines, which extend for miles beneath the sea. From Sydney we went on to St. Johns, N. F., where we stopped for a few hours in order to repair one of our compasses. Two days after leaving St. Johns, a quarter after eight o'clock on the morning of July 17th, the steamer, being surrounded by a heavy fog, collided with an iceberg. Great commotion arose among the passengers, which, however, quickly abated, for it was discovered that no serious damage had been inflicted. It was decided to put into Cape Charles, on the southern coast of Labrador, for repairs. Here we remained for several days, and devoted ourselves to making collections of the flora and fauna of this section. The country about Cape Charles is composed of low hills formed of granite, syenite and hornblende. The student of geology will find here trap-dykes and veins of various kinds, also remarkable examples of anticlinal and synclinal strata exhibited on the eroded surfaces of the almost perpendicular cliffs along the shore.. The country is almost destitute of trees, but there is a great profusion of mosses, principally sphagnum, and reindeer moss abounds. We procured here a beautiful specimen of the Canadian lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), but saw no evidences of small mammals other than the rabbit (*Lepus americanus*), of which two specimens were procured. We saw several seals, but did not have the good fortune to capture any.

As the Miranda was obliged to return to St. John's for further repairs, we embarked from Cape Charles on the regular mail boat for Independent Harbor, the entrance to Sandwich Bay, about sixty miles south of Hamilton Bay, where I had originally intended to begin my explorations. I was obliged to change my plans on account of the accident to the Miranda, and the illness of Mr. Bucknell, who had been taken sick shortly after leaving New York. When we arrived at Independent Harbor we secured passage in a small boat to Separation Point, a narrow point of land separating the White Bear from the Eagle River. Here we made a cache of our provisions, and, with our two small boats, started to explore the White Bear River. On the second day out from Separation Point we came to a considerable cataract, sixty feet in height. Mr. Bucknell's condition was now so serious that I deemed it unwise for him to proceed any further, and so I pitched camp at the foot of the falls, and left him in charge of Mr. Coates, to collect ornithological and botanical specimens, while Mr. Perkins and myself took the smaller boat, and provisions for ten days, and went around to explore the river. We ascended it to a distance of about one hundred and ninety miles from its mouth. We found the streams at this season of the year very shallow, with numerous rapids, which rendered its ascent extremely difficult. Frequently we were compelled to remove our trousers and boots and push the boat along, the water not being deep enough to float the boat while we remained in it. After passing a rapid, or rattle, as it is called by the half-breed Labradorians, there was usually quite an expanse of water extending for some distance; this is called by the natives a "stiddy." Our progress along these "stiddies" was comparatively easy. About fifty miles from the coast, and on either side of the river, rose hills and peaks from 1400 to 1600 feet in height. These were covered with a dense primeval growth of spruce and tamarack, with an occasional clump of birch-trees, and great beds of moss from a foot to three feet in depth. Great numbers of dwarf cornel (*Cornus canadensis*) abounded. We came across numberless erratic boulders of labradorite, as well as other boulders of all sizes, which lined the bed and sides of the stream.

As we penetrated into the interior of the country and neared the source of the river, the physical aspect was entirely changed, owing to the absence of forests and the less variety and abundance of moss. The boulders increased in numbers, and were covered with lichens of various kinds. After we had made the first fifty miles we saw no evidences of animal life whatever. The river terminated in a chain of small lakes. On either bank we found vegetation, principally willows, all bent down stream, and the bark scarred and scratched, indicating that the water in the spring of the year had risen to a height of eighteen or twenty feet. At the lower portion of the river we found peculiar semicircles of boulders, ranging in size from the dimensions of a hen's-egg to two and three feet in diameter. We learned that this fantastic arrangement of the boulders was due to the peculiar action of the ice during the spring, the boulders being transported by the ice and dropped in this position by eddies. At first we thought that these peculiar circles of stones might have been arranged by the early inhabitants of Labrador.

When we returned to camp we found that Mr. Bucknell's condition had not improvod, though he and Mr. Coates had managed to make a very creditable collection of birds and plants. After a day's excursion on the south fork of the White Bear River we returned to Separation Point. I sent Mr. Bucknell over to Cartwright, the most southern and eastern Hudson Bay trading-post on the Labrador shore, and, with Mr. Perkins and Mr. Coates, continued the exploration of the Eagle and Paradise Rivers. We found the Eagle River much deeper, narrower and more rapid than the White Bear, and only about half as long. The Paradise River was very broad in comparison with the other two, as it flows through a more level section of the country. Here we found an abundance of plants which did not grow in the more mountainous districts, and we came across a number of large lakes, upon which were a great many species of water-birds not before seen on the trip. We ascended this river only about forty miles.

Lining the banks of the river were dense growths of willows; but these did not show in any way the effects of high water. We found seals all along the river as far as we went, and procured about twenty skins, principally of the Harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina*), though we also captured specimens of the *Phoca fœtida*, *Phoca hispida*, *Phoca grœnandica* and *Cistophora cristata.*

This river, like the Paradise and Eagle, abounded with trout and salmon, which afforded us rare sport and kept our table well supplied.

On the north side of Sandwich Bay is a mountain 1900 feet high, on which caribous (*Rangifer caribou*) are very abundant. We ascended this mountain and shot several specimens of caribous, and also found here a vein of labradorite outcropping on the surface that measured forty-two feet in length and three feet in width, with a dip of 47° east of south. We also found small veins of mica and great quantities of iron ore, also copper in the form of malachite. Hornblende, gneiss, syenite and granite were the principal rocks. We also came across great quantities of small crystals of garnet, some of them very pretty. In several places surrounding Sandwich Bay, and on each of the rivers we discovered glacial striations running southeast in direction. Some of these were ten or twelve feet long, and were distinctly cut in the smooth, polished surface of the rocks. At Cartwright, and, in fact, throughout the section that we explored, we found but few full-blooded Eskimos. The inhabitants of southern Labrador are a mixed breed of people, Eskimo mixed with various nationalities, mainly English and Danish.

The Labrador waters are noted as among the greatest fisheries in the world for cod and salmon. There are about 25,000 fishermen along these shores, who come chiefly from Newfoundland, and depend wholly upon fish for their living. This past year the fisheries have been a total failure, both in Labrador and off the coast of Newfoundland. Great suffering has been reported from Newfoundland, but from the condition of affairs we saw in Labrador the sufferings of the Newfoundland fishermen must be slight in comparison to those of the destitute Labrador people.

Just before we left Cartwright on our return voyage, a severe storm took place, and nearly three hundred shipwrecked fishermen were brought to Newfoundland by the Labrador mail steamer.

The relationship of the Eskimos of Labrador to those of Greenland has been a matter of some controversy. I wish to call attention to a little fact in regard to the clothing of these two peoples, which may have some bearing upon the question of their relationship. On the lower edge of the *timiak*, or coat, of the Labrador Eskimo, in front and behind, are two ornamental appendages in the form of flaps; the anterior one is but a few inches in length, while the posterior flap reaches in some instances below the knee, being narrow at the top and gradually broadening out like a beaver's tail. This is highly decorated on the back with various colored pieces of seal-skin from which the hair has been removed, and with a border of another color from which the hair has not been removed. These flaps are to be found among the Eskimos of Greenland, especially among those above Cape Cook. Among them, however, the posterior flap is but a few inches in length, and during the severe Arctic winters the Greenland Eskimos tie these flaps together between the legs, outside and over the *nanookies*, or trousers, and so make of them a support and a protection against the cold. The Eskimos of Labrador are more or less given to ornamentation of various kinds, while those of North Greenland are intensely practical and display no ornamentation in their dress.

The idea occurred to me that the Eskimos, in travelling northward along the American side, conceived the idea of tying these flaps between their legs, and as the people parted company and split into sections, one section retained the flaps for ornamental purposes, while another section, going still further north into Greenland, preserved the flaps for practical purposes only.

The Eskimos and Indians of Alaska, as far as I have been able to ascertain, have neither the front nor the back appendage on their *timiaks*. However trivial this suggestion may seem, I wish that men concerned in tracing the relationship and origin of the Eskimo tribes would give this matter some attention.

As regards our natural history collections, we obtained thirty-nine species of mammals and seventy-seven species of birds, all of which, with the exception of two species of birds, are listed by Prof. Packard in his work, entitled " The Labrador Coast."

Mr. Coates made a large collection of plants, but as yet these have not been identified. Five butterflies not given by Prof. Packard were procured. We were not prepared for marine collections, but, nevertheless, we secured a number of echinoderms, one of which was a magnificent twelve-rayed star-fish. Of batrachia two species were procured, *Rana septentrionalis* and *Bufo americanus*. We saw nothing of the salamander, *Plethodon glutinosus*, of which Packard speaks, nor did we see that peculiar jumping-mouse, *Zapus hudsonius*, which Mr. Bryant mentions as being so abundant along the Hamilton or Grand River. Any naturalist in search of specimens of the mosquito and black fly will find a most prolific field in Labrador. Such numbers of these pests did we encounter that I have come to look upon Labrador as the fatherland of these torments.

We left Cartwright on September 14th for Pilley's Island, off the Newfoundland coast, and here we caught the steamer Sylvia for New York. We arrived in New York on September 30th, very nearly three months from the date of our start.

CHARLES E. HITE.